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CHRIST'S GRACIOUS INVITATION.

“Ye sinners, come: 'tis Jesus' voice;
The gracious call obey:
Mercy invites to heavenly joys,
And can you yet delay?”

MORE precious than a stream of water to a traveller perishing with thirst—better than a skilful physician to one dying of a dangerous disease—more welcome than a reprieve to a condemned rebel, is the voice of mercy saying to the convinced sinner, “COME UNTO ME, ALL YE THAT LABOR AND ARE HEAVY-LADEN, AND I WILL GIVE YOU REST.” Matt. 11: 28.

These are words that can never lose their sweetness nor power by age or repetition. They are as true and as full of grace and mercy now as when first uttered; and are as free to those who hear the gospel in the present day, as they were to those who first heard them in the land of Galilee.

Who is he that speaks? It is the voice of “Immanuel, God with us.” What man or angel

could invite a guilty world to come to *him*. Neither Moses, nor Elijah, nor Paul, nor John, presumed to call men to look to them for rest. Only He in whom "dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily," could give rest to every troubled soul.

It is the voice of a loving Saviour, the good Shepherd of the sheep, the compassionate Redeemer of men, whose heart is an ocean of love, and whose love led him to take the form of a servant, and to humble himself to the death of the cross.

To whom does he speak these words? To all who hear the sound of the gospel. They are addressed to the man of pleasure or of sorrow, the man of wealth or of deepest penury, the man esteemed for his morality or notorious for his vice, to Jew and Gentile, to "every creature under heaven." And yet they seem specially suited to those burdened with a sense of their guilt. To those who feel they have a blind mind and a hard heart, and a load of sin that presses them to the ground, these words come as words of peace and hope.

How must you come? Not by a bodily approach; this is now impossible. The heavens have received him out of our sight. A local coming, if it were practicable, might be useless. Many came to Christ when he was on earth; they

heard his words and saw his miracles of mercy, and went unblest, for they had not faith. Coming to Christ is the act of the soul; it is a spiritual approach, and is called trusting, receiving, believing on him. It is a full persuasion that he is the Son of God and the Saviour of the lost. It is the heavy-laden sinner giving full credit to the truth and sincerity of gospel invitations and promises. It is the hearty belief that Jesus is able and willing to save from sin and all its consequences. It is a sincere humble dependence upon the merits of his sacrifice for pardon and eternal life.

Will you come to Christ? Then come just as you are, helpless, unworthy, full of guilt and misery. You can come in no other way, for a sense of sin and ruin lies at the foundation of the religion of the gospel. Do not for a moment suppose that you must make yourself better, or prepare your heart for a worthy reception of Christ, but come at once—come as you are. He saves none because their sins are comparatively few and unnoticed by their fellow-men; he rejects none because their sins are many and great.

Christ knew the worst of all those who would come to him. He knew the depths of sin to which men would go. He understood the deep spiritual necessities of every immortal soul for time and eternity. He knew that men burdened

and bound by sin would need such an invitation and assurance as he has given. And because he knew that his grace would be sufficient for the worst of the human race, he therefore said, Come unto me, and I will not cast you out.

If he made such a promise, what can prevent his fulfilling it? Sooner shall heaven and earth pass away than any sinner who seeks to him be excluded from his mercy. He will not cast you out because of the number of your sins, nor because of their greatness and enormity, nor because of the peculiar aggravations attending them, nor because they have been of long continuance—from early youth to hoary age. You may be a profligate and an outcast, abandoned by men as beyond the hope of recovery, lost to yourself and your friends, yet say not that you are excluded from the invitation. Even *you* are addressed as though by name. The invitation says, "Who-soever," Rev. 22: 7; that includes you. "If any man," John 7: 37; that embraces you. To "*all*;" that takes you in. It says, "I will *in no wise*"—not by any means, or on any account whatever—"cast him out." Surely this is enough.

No man who hears the gospel has any pretence to say that he is not invited. Stand where we may on this wide earth, among nominal christians at home, or among the heathen abroad, or

in the midst of Jews or Mohammedans—to those of every clime and every age and every condition of life—to the lovers of pleasure, or wealth, or any of the things of this world, and to the most guilty and the most hardened of the human race, with confidence and joy these words may be addressed, “Come unto Christ.”

The promise is that he will give you REST. And this includes pardon and acceptance with God. It includes a deliverance from the condemnation and the tyranny of sin, from fear and remorse, from all spiritual enemies and all vain self-righteous hopes. It is a cordial for an accusing conscience, it is consolation for the oppressed, it is peace for the troubled spirit, it is a balm for every evil that can afflict us in our passage through life, and it is the earnest and pledge of the glorious, pure, eternal rest of heaven.

What is the warrant of all this? The character of him who spoke these words. Christ is love incarnate—divine love in human nature. The great end for which he came into the world was to seek and to save sinners. He came to honor and obey the law that man had broken, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, which is “unto all and upon all them that believe.” Rom. 3: 22. He came to die, “the just for the unjust,” 1 Pet. 3: 18, and to pay the penalty

that man's sins had required, by offering himself as an atonement for guilt. The promise that he makes, rests on the value of the infinite price he paid to secure our salvation. He does not offer a gift that cost him nothing, and yet it may be had "without money and without price."

Consider too that he is "meek and lowly of heart," and will not proudly repel or scorn you for your unworthiness. When did he ever turn away from the cry of distress, or from the wail of the most abject? When did he ever reject those who sought his aid, however lowly their condition or great their sorrow? All who have come to him have been welcomed; and if you draw nigh in faith he will not cast you out. That you may come aright, he promises the aid of his Holy Spirit to make you sensible of your sinfulness, and of his grace and ability to save you.

What reception will you give to this "golden saying," this gracious invitation? The case is urgent; come speedily. There is danger if you delay. Do not speculate, nor argue, nor make excuse, nor hesitate, nor stand looking at a distance, but COME, and in faith cast yourself at the feet of Christ with the earnest penitential cry, "Lord, save, or I perish. Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief."

INVITATION.

COME, ye sinners, poor and wretched,
Weak and wounded, sick and sore,
Jesus ready stands to save you,
Full of pity, love, and power:
He is able,
He is willing: doubt no more.

Come, ye weary, heavy-laden,
Lost and ruined by the fall;
If you tarry till you're better,
You will never come at all:
Not the righteous—
Sinners Jesus came to call.

Let not conscience make you linger,
Nor of fitness fondly dream;
All the fitness he requireth,
Is to feel your need of him:
This he gives you—
'Tis the Spirit's rising beam.

Agonizing in the garden,
Lo, your Saviour prostrate lies!
On the bloody tree behold him!
Hear him cry before he dies,
"It is finished!"
Sinners, will not *this* suffice?

Lo, th' incarnate God, ascended,
Pleads the merit of his blood;
Venture on him, venture wholly,
Let no other trust intrude:
None but Jesus
Can do helpless sinners good.

Saints and angels, joined in concert,
 Sing the praises of the Lamb ;
 While the blissful seats of heaven
 Sweetly echo with his name.
 Hallelujah !
 Sinners here may sing the same.

ACCEPTANCE.

Just as I am—without one plea,
 But that thy blood was shed for me,
 And that thou bid'st me come to thee,
 O Lamb of God, I come.

Just as I am ; and waiting not
 To rid my soul of one dark blot—
 To Thee, whose blood can cleanse each spot,
 O Lamb of God, I come.

Just as I am, though tossed about
 With many a conflict, many a doubt,
 With fears within, and foes without—
 O Lamb of God, I come.

Just as I am—poor, wretched, blind :
 Sight, riches, healing of the mind,
 Yea, all I need, in *Thee* to find,
 O Lamb of God, I come.

Just as I am, thou wilt receive,
 Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relive,
 Because thy promise I believe
 O Lamb of God, I come.

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